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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KIGALI 000822

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KIGALI 00000822 001.4 OF 002

SUBJECT: RWANDAN CABINET SHUFFLE, NEW FOREIGN AND FINANCE
MINISTERS

Classified By: Ambassador W. Stuart Symington for reasons 1.4 b,d.

¶1. (C) Summary. In the third cabinet shuffle of the year,
President Kagame replaced his Foreign and Finance ministers

and rearranged cabinet responsibilities for other ministers.
The new Foreign Minister, Louise Mushikwabo, had been
Minister of Information. She came back to Rwanda and became
Information Minister in March 2008 following a stint as the
Communications Director for the African Development Bank in
Tunis. Prior to that, she had been living in the United
States since 1985, where she met and married her American
husband. The new Finance Minister is a highly respected
technocrat who had been the number two official at the
Ministry. The shuffle appears more driven by technical than
political motives, but the Finance Minister's move to Local
Government was an unexpected move that is perceived as a
demotion even though his new position keeps a senior member
of the President's own political party and inner circle in a
key position for relations with local and regional officials
on the eve of an election year. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Late evening December 2nd President Kagame shuffled
key cabinet ministers unexpectedly. The news came after a
lengthy cabinet meeting that day, but was not decided in the
meeting. It visibly surprised the replaced Minister of
Finance, James Musoni, and others. Kagame replaced Foreign
Minister Museminali with Louise Mushikwabo, who had been
Minister of Information. Former Finance Ministry Permanent
Secretary John Rwangombwa replaced Musoni, who moved to the
Ministry of Local Government. The new Minister of
Infrastructure, Vincent Karega, had been Minister of State
for Mines and Environment. The former Infrastructure
Minister Linda Bihire, like the former Foreign Minister, did
not receive a new cabinet post. The Minister of Environment
and Natural Resources Stanislas Kamanzi saw his Ministry
divided and he will now serve as Minister of Environment and
Lands. Christophe Bavivamo, formerly Minister of Local
Government, will head the second half of that ministry, now
called the Ministry of Forestry and Mines. (Note: See septel
for the new lineup. End note.)

¶3. (C) Musoni learned of the cabinet shuffle when he was
called away from an event with the Prime Minister and others
for the departing European Union Ambassador last night. His
successor, permanent secretary John Rwangomwa, was notified
minutes later. Musoni's move to the Local Government
portfolio is a lateral or downward move. He had held the
important finance portfolio for more than 3 years. However,
he replaces another Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) senior
leader at the Local Government helm and that is an important

position in an election year serving as the government's link with regional and local officials. (Bio note: Rwangombwa was born and raised in Uganda. He received an economics degree from Makerere University and an M.B.A. from the Kigali branch of Maastricht University. In 2002, Rwangombwa joined the Ministry of Finance as the head of the treasury and general accountant of state finances. In 2006, he became the secretary general and secretary to the treasury in the same ministry. Prior to the Ministry of Finance, Rwangombwa worked at the Rwanda Revenue Authority. He is a member of the Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) and sits on its economic commission. End Bio Note.)

14. (C) Foreign Minister Louise Mushikwabo's ascent was rapid, even by Rwandan standards. A close embassy contact, she is not expected to change the very productive working relationship between the USG and GOR. Her French language skills will help Rwanda's efforts to integrate its French- and English-speaking neighbors in a common effort to promote regional development and will assist Rwanda as it now reaches out to France having restored diplomatic relations earlier in the week. (Bio Note: The minister is the celebrated author of an autobiographical book on the genocide, "Rwanda Means the Universe." Her book details her own distinguished family background and the murder of most of her family during the 1994 genocide. She is a U.S. permanent resident (green card holder) who returned to Rwanda with her American husband only a year and a half ago to take up the Minister of Information

KIGALI 00000822 002.2 OF 002

portfolio. We have worked with her productively to develop our MCC Threshold media training component. The Foreign Minister is a warm though sometimes guarded interlocutor; publicly she is occasionally seen as a "fiery" figure for her passionate advocacy. Unlike her reserved predecessor who spoke no French, Louise is a fluent French speaker. Mushikiwabo, the youngest of nine children, grew up in Rwanda and attended the National University of Rwanda. A scholarship recipient, she pursued graduate studies in French and Conference Interpretation at the University of Delaware. She was working in public relations in Washington, DC when she learned that most members of her immediate family, including her brother Lando Ndasingwa, the only Tutsi in Habyarimana's transitional cabinet, were killed in the 1994 genocide. Mushikiwabo is the co-founder and president of the Rwanda Children's Fund, a charitable organization based in Washington, DC. Prior to becoming the Minister of Information in March 2008, Mushikiwabo was the communications director at the African Development Bank. Like many highly educated Rwandans who grew up in the country, Mushikiwabo speaks Kinyarwanda, French, English, and Swahili. End Bio Note)

15. (C) Vincent Karega's move up to Minister of Infrastructure reflects his widely respected technical proficiency. A low-key, soft spoken personality, Karega had served in the Ministry of Finance from 1996 to 2003 and in the Ministry of Public Service and Labor from 2003 to 2006, before becoming Minister of State for industry and investment promotion. Similarly, the the new Finance Minister's promotion appears to be a reward for personal expertise for a technocrat, not a politician; his long experience in the Finance Ministry and his success in a series of increasingly important jobs reflects more skill than political influence. (Bio note: Fluent in both French and English, Karega received a B.A. in sociology from the University of Lubumbashi in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and an M.A. in management from a university in South Africa. End Bio Note)

16. (C) The move from being Minister of Local Government to Minister of Forestry and Mines by Christophe Bazivamo came after he had spent only a few months in the former position. He moved to the Local Government portfolio from Minister of Agriculture in July 2009. Bazivamo is another senior RPF leader. His new position is less important than either of the two he held in the past, but still gives this native son

of the Northern Province a portfolio with nationwide responsibility for key economic resources of mining and forestry. Similarly, Kamanzi's move is a demotion. He now is to head only a portion of his former ministry. However, the government has increased significantly the importance it attaches to environmental and water resource matters and his focus on those matters will keep him in a significant position.

17. (C) Comment: Installing the hardworking and dynamic Mushikiwabo as Foreign Minister not only will raise the profile of Rwandan diplomacy, but it will underscore Rwanda's Qprofile of Rwandan diplomacy, but it will underscore Rwanda's intention to bridge English and French speaking interests. This will be a benefit within the region and globally. She will also bring the passion and credibility of her significant personal loss during the 1994 genocide to her advocacy with the international community on genocide-related issues. The other cabinet moves put low-key, respected technocrats without significant political influence in the key Finance Ministry and Infrastructure positions, while keeping Kagame insider Musoni in a position of importance as Local Government Minister. The losers in the shuffle were former Ministers Museminali and Bihire, and former Minister of State for Energy Albert Butare, whose future assignments, if any, have not been announced. None of those who left the cabinet have been the focus of either political infighting or public allegations of corruption or wrongdoing. The U.S. has had a close, productive working relationship with the new Foreign Minister, Finance Minister and Minister of Infrastructure as well as their predecessors and we expect that to continue. End Comment.
SYMINGTON